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minority health are but two examples of the many wonderful stories that will be told about the benefits of dedicating the tobacco settlement dollars to Nebraska's health care needs. That indeed is good news for the health and well-being of Nebraskans. Just last week, the national publication Education Week praised our state's commitment to early childhood efforts. The three initiatives singled out were the business child-care tax credit, which will be available beginning in 2003; a significant boost in funding for Early Childhood Projects, which is a grant program that helps communities set up collaborative child-care programs; and a scholarship program for child-care providers who pursue training in early childhood development. These programs and our state's commitment to early childhood education and development initiatives are great news for children and families. These are some of the success stories of 2001. However, the successes of this past year have been overshadowed by national and international events. Today our nation is in the midst of recession. We know about the painful loss of tens of thousands of jobs across America, including many here in Nebraska, and we know about how the fall of the stock market has impacted the savings and the pensions of millions of Americans and many thousands of Nebraskans. It is no consolation to those who have been personally impacted by the economic downturn, but the fact remains that Nebraska's economy is in better shape than most states. Our economy continues to grow, as evidenced by climbing state tax receipts, albeit at a slower pace than before the national recession. This stands in contrast to some states where the economy is actually contracting and tax receipts are sliding backward. Besides the recession, 2001 will forever be remembered by the events of September 11th. Even today we mourn the loss of thousands of Americans to senseless act of terrorism and we remain steadfast in our resolve to support the war on terror. The jolt to our nation's and, to a lesser extent, our state's economy following September 11th left no doubt about the need to pull back on state government spending and to restructure our budget. In October, I called this Legislature into special session and presented a plan to adjust the budget. In a period of just nine working days you convened, you rolled up your sleeves, you got down to business, and you approved a budget reduction package totaling about \$171 million. You adjourned knowing that there